2023 Funding Request for the Security Grant Matching Program

Frequently Asked Questions

These FAQs are intended for use in your conversations with legislators and stakeholders. Please do not forward to recipients in lieu of a conversation. To send a letter of support to legislators, go to the Legislative Communications Toolkit and download a sample that you can customize.

1. ***Are there security risks at small, rural courts? Why invest in security equipment and/or staffing for them?***

   - Rural courts have not been immune to acts of violence. Yes, security is expensive, but inadequate security may be even more expensive. Lawsuits can cost several times more than adequately funding a secure courthouse. Human costs in terms of devastation to members of families, communities, and courts matter too.

   - Risk analyst reports indicate that several small rural courthouses need security upgrades to comply with GR 36 minimum standards and have little or no security to help deter any threat/attack on the court or citizens.

   - Over 10% of security incidents reported to the Administrative Office of the Courts have occurred in fifteen rural courthouses that house both a Superior and District Court and have little to no entry screening or adequate security equipment.

2. ***Why aren't local governments able to fund security equipment and staff?***

   - Many local jurisdictions don't have adequate revenue streams to support security enhancements at courthouses. The state historically funds certain initiatives within courthouses (Becca funding, interpreter funding, drug courts, therapeutic courts, early learning courts, etc.), and the state has the capacity to fill this critical gap in courthouse security across the state to ensure that anyone seeking justice is safe when doing so.

   - This matching grant program includes a cost sharing component so that small and rural courts in economically distressed jurisdiction contribute a small percentage to the costs of courthouse security. The local share will range from 10-50%; the higher the level of economic distress, the lower the contribution.

   - Funding priorities of local governments in small, rural counties focus on the ability to maintain critical services such as law enforcement which typically accounts for a significant portion of the government's general expenses.

   - Many rural counties in Washington have lower assessed property values, much lower median household incomes, and limited abilities to create a revenue source to undertake security at their courthouse.

   - Many rural small rural communities are having to address increasing demands on services associated with mental health and homelessness in areas already seeing significant numbers of unemployment and people living in poverty.

3. ***Why does the State legislature have a role in the safety of courthouses?***

   - These funds protect the safety of all people who enter Washington State Courts. The state has an obligation to ensure that those individuals seeking justice and those individuals working with and for our court system have a reasonable expectation of security and to preserve Washingtonians' access to our judicial system.

- The courts requesting funding are administering justice according to Washington State laws.

- Providing a safe and secure courthouse for jurors, victims, and witnesses is instrumental to providing proper due process for all. Court security protects not just individuals; proper court security is protecting the judicial process for all citizens in Washington.

4. *Will this budget request provide security funding for to all courts?*

- Only small and rural courts that are located in economically distressed jurisdictions are eligible for funding and a proportional contribution from local governments ranging from 10-50% is required. Contribution proportions are based on the revenue base, median income, and poverty rate of the jurisdiction.

- Funding will be allocated first to the neediest locations that have not received prior funding, with the goal of addressing every court's needs over time.